

TOWN OF OCEAN VIEW
DELAWARE

July 10, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and Council

FROM: Carol S. Houck, Town Manager 

SUBJECT: Town Manager Report for the Council Meeting of July 14, 2020

It is my pleasure to provide you with information related to the activities of the Town and my engagements during the past month:

Osher Lifelong Learning Classes will remain online only for the fall sessions. Therefore, no classes will be held in Town Hall through at least December.

June Council Workshop – As you know the Town held a Council Workshop in June for the purpose of discussing the method of recruiting candidates for our Boards and Commissions. The workshop provided the Council with the opportunity to discuss options and concerns such as term limits and interest to increase our outreach to ensure more people were aware of opportunities. As requested, your packet for this meeting includes an outline of our planned outreach efforts associated with the workshop discussion.

COVID-19 Response Update - As of writing the State remains in Phase II of its reopening plan. The Administrative offices at 201 Central have remained closed to the public except for pre-arranged meetings and of course Police Operations. Currently, we continue to stagger the staff time in the building. Staff continue to cooperate and wear masks when near others, handwashing and wiping down of copiers and the like while in the facility.

- Planning and Codes are meeting with by appointment and reception activities are taking place via the call box with engagement, as necessary.
- Financial and other obligations/workload is moving along with little to no interruption using scanning and/or direct access to our systems from home.
- Several staff members have improved their home office areas with equipment such as printers and scanners to ensure ability to continue to get their work completed in a more efficient manner. These steps were taken independently.
- Public Works and maintenance operations are as usual (taking precautions when meeting with contractors/vendors) and mosquito spraying operations are occurring during the early morning hours several days a week, weather permitting.
- Our facility continues to be sprayed and cleaned more frequently.

- Spraying of play equipment and restrooms at the park (also increased cleaning) will begin July 15th with the opening of the playground and our first outdoor movie that evening. We will monitor this event and playground usage to determine if additional precautions or decisions need to be made.
- I will be meeting with the management team to discuss our return to work plans and any impacts to the staggered staffing on or between departments.

FY2021 Community Events – as noted above our first Classic Movie will be held July 15th in John West Park featuring Jail House Rock and Elvis Impersonator Bob Lougheed! A copy of the current line up of events for the remainder of the year is attached for your reference.

Mediacom Cable Franchise Agreement – I have continued to work through the franchise document with Solicitor Schrader and our consultant Dan Cohen. We continue to be on a month to month continuation under the former agreement until such time that Mayor and Council are presented and hopefully approve the new cable franchise agreement. A highlight to the new agreement will be the Town's Government Access Channel (if we successfully negotiate terms). I have drafted a fact sheet on the Cable Franchise agreement as there has been a misunderstanding by some in thinking it covered internet and or that we were blocking others from coming in town to offer internet or cable tv.

201 Central Ave Exterior Improvements – The exterior improvement project began several weeks ago and continues at time of writing. It should be substantially completed by the end of August. Allstate's Construction has been great to work with, very responsive and is keeping a clean worksite. The final product is being installed in some areas of the structure and I am happy with the outcome. Mr. Wheatly is on site periodically to oversee the work and I have had regular engagement with the work supervisor. Allstate's is working cooperatively with the Police Department regarding camera and other equipment disruptions. The project will result in a more efficient and attractive facility. Here are a few photo's, the last of which shows some of the rotted area associated with the poor installation practices when the facility was originally constructed:



International City/County Manager's Association (ICMA) – As you know I am a member of ICMA and have been a Credentialed Manager for 8 years. In association with this I am participating in a Multi Rater Leadership Assessment required to maintain my credentialing. Eighteen individuals that have worked with or currently work with me have been asked to complete a questionnaire.

This is a new requirement, but I am looking forward to getting the feedback/detail once completed.

The Following represents accomplishments of our Public Works Manager – Jerrad Steele:

Daily building checks at 201 Central and 32 West Ave
Daily playground safety check
Weekly mosquito spraying conducted 2am
Oversight of and engagement with our outsourced landscaping and mowing contractors
Pick up of our sign order and storage or install of same
Bike and Truck signs installed on Atlantic Ave
New Street signs on Hudson Ave
Reinstalled damaged stop sign that was hit on Tingle St
Oversaw and consulted with contractor on additional sod placement adjacent our parking lot project
Mowed grass weekly at the Public Works facility
Sprayed the poison ivy at Colt Lane open space area
Irrigation repairs at 201 Central
Cleaned both DPW trucks
Repaired trailer light on the 18-foot trailer
Movies in the park preparations and painting of theme boards/photo ops
Trimming of bushes at 32 West
Replaced damaged speed limit sign on N. Primrose
Weed spraying of various traffic islands
Test movie screen, projector, and sound for Classic Movies
Continue to sign and caution tape playground area
Met with Town Manager and Playground/Exercise Equip Rep on the budgeted improvements to the park and playground
Met with Town Manager and holiday lighting rep
Watering of Ferns at Porch in Park when performing playground inspections
Engagement with HVAC contractor and Lighting contractor for various issues/projects

MEDIACOM CABLE FRANCHISE – INFORMATION SHEET

The Cable Franchise that the Town of Ocean View has with Mediacom relates solely to Cable TV. It does not cover the company's internet service/nor broadband.

Mediacom is the only cable provider in Ocean View but only because no other provider has chosen to offer this service. We can and would negotiate additional franchise agreements if any company showed interest. The only exclusivity is related to the lack of competition and not as a written rule that we can only have one cable franchise.

The 2020 Cable Franchise renewal will also afford the Town of Ocean View the added benefit of gaining a Government Access Channel. This is something the Town has never requested before but that we are looking forward to having. It will be another tool for communicating with our public.

Regarding internet service in our area, it is correct that Mediacom is the only option for most, however, Sea Colony has Comcast. Comcast is also bringing internet to the Bethany commercial area and planning to move down Rte. 26 offering commercial internet. Internet is not subject to franchise agreements and again, if any other company wanted to enter our area they would be able to do so. There is no exclusivity provision/monopoly except for their being the only provider interested in being here.

To that end, over the last year, myself and the Managers from South Bethany, Millville and Bethany Beach have been meeting with Comcast to encourage their coming to our area to offer residential cable and internet. As you can imagine, their decisions to provide service are economically driven and based on the cost to build and the number of customers to be gained. For that reason, the towns have shared detail related to the number of residential units that span out from Rte. 26. Those already here and those on the books to be built. The idea was to combine our numbers to hopefully get their attention. As for now – we are on their radar, but no definitive decisions have been made. We have also included Sussex County in this engagement. This effort has been slowed by the pandemic unfortunately as meetings have been cancelled and have yet to be rescheduled. I will be reaching out today to try to get an update from Comcast.

While we have had complaints raised regarding internet service since I have been here, they have not been extensive. I am however aware of a general negativity regarding the internet service and have shared this with Mediacom, as have the other towns. I have brought any issues to the attention of Mediacom who has very quickly responded to the customers. Those complaints that I have brought to their attention have all been addressed to the satisfaction of the residents. I would be happy to engage Mediacom on behalf of any resident who wishes to share their concerns.

Regarding broadband – this is a topic we need to discuss/research further as a Town.

Carol Houck
Ocean View Town Manager
July 9, 2020

